

MUNSON MEMORIAL BUILDING

Fiscal Year 2005

Munson Memorial Building, located on the South Amherst Common, continues as a center of activity for the Town of Amherst. The handsome white building was built in 1925 with money donated to the Town by Mrs. Parnell Munson. Mrs. Munson wished the building to be named in memory of her husband stipulated that a library would always be included in the building. This stipulation has always been fulfilled by the Munson branch of the Jones Library. Munson also serves as the Precinct 8 polling place for the Town. Many groups rent the beautiful upstairs auditorium, whose windows look out on an old apple orchard. The elegant wood floors regularly see use by a variety of dancers. A spacious downstairs room, furnished with a large meeting table and bordered by three small offices, is also available for rental and for community meetings. The building is used seven days a week year-round and is a wonderful resource for the Town.

Oversight of the maintenance and use of the building is in the hands of three trustees appointed by the Town Manager. The FY 05 trustees are Claudia O'Brien, Chair; Betsey Johnson; and Johan Brongers. Rentals of the building are scheduled by Town employees. Munson has seen a 32% increase in use this year, to 1,035 in 365 days. Rental fees, including rent paid by the Jones Library, have consistently more than equaled the yearly budget. However, these funds are not set aside for the upkeep of Munson but rather go into the Town's General Fund.

The Munson is a relatively old building and is always in need of careful attention to maintenance. The last major renovation of Munson dates back to 1989. In the last year, the downstairs room and hall had been painted, roofing repairs done, a new sewer pump installed, and new sidewalks built. The Town employees doing the sidewalk did a wonderful job, with great care given to the garden area. Two volunteers, Sandra Clark and Chris Hern, have donated their time and expertise to improving the Munson grounds. Sandra has continued her splendid renovation of the walled garden, and Chris Hern has revamped the south garden. The Thursday Club of South Amherst donated money for bulbs to be planted. The Amherst Orchid Society donated money for the Munson Building as well, although this went into the General Fund that collects rent and therefore could not be used directly for the building itself.

Achieving completion of long-standing projects has been very difficult. Carpeting, heating systems updates, and a shed for the lawn mower are all on hold, even though most of these items were funded in the FY 03 capital expenditures budget passed by Town Meeting. The Trustees are pleased with the positive maintenance that took place this year; they look forward to seeing the remaining needs taken care of during this coming year.

Parking and public safety are of great concern to the Trustees, as the volume and speed of traffic have substantially increased over the years, causing safety hazards for visitors to the Munson. Several excellent options were presented by the Town engineers at public meetings with abutters and other townspeople. The Trustees are very grateful for the expert and excellent work done by the Public Works Department. We look forward to solving these safety issues.

Munson is a warm and inviting space. Please come visit this outstanding jewel on the South Amherst Common.

Claudia O'Brien, Chair
Munson Memorial Building Trustees